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The voice of the Darjeeling Hills

Kasto Mazza Hai  
Rail Lai Ma.....

English Style

## THE SILENT DISASTER

Prashant Phenomenon,  
Darjeeling Hills &  
Sixth Schedule

Hon.Mary Scott

# Himalayan Times



## GORAKHALAND OR SIXTH SCHEDULE



By Sandip C. Jain

Ever since Prashant entered the top three in the Indian Idol contest I have been noticing this young teenage girl walking about in Kalimpong with a different pair of jeans but the same white T-Shirt everyday – now before anyone gets any naughty thought about any intention let me hastily add that I noticed her only because of what’s written on her white T-Shirt. The words on her T-Shirt simply says PRASHANT ROCKS!!

Well I think she is absolutely right – he really has rocked not just on stage but in more ways than just that. Prashant's victory has rocked the entire Hills society and in other places too-he has rocked the Political equation of the region, he has rocked the social system of the region – he has rocked the economical status of the region and believe it or not he also rocked Dasai.

Politics equation - because now Mr. Subhas Ghising has someone to reckon with in Darjeeling. Mr. Bimal Gurung though a prominent leader since long back is now on center –stage riding high on the fact that he sphere-headed the Vote Prashant campaign in Darjeeling and so quite naturally his stocks rose dramatically in the event of Prashant's victory. Whether he will go the Tsheten Sherpa way on the Chatray Subba way or the C.K. Pradhan way or maybe he would be able to do what they had all set out to do i.e. topple the regime of

Mr. Ghising, is a thing of the future but then one cannot deny the fact that if Prashant had not been in the Indian Idol contest, it would have taken some more time before Mr. Bimal Gurung, for that matter anyone else, to stand up to the “supreme leader”.

Social system – because of the fact that had Prashant not rocked then Siliguri too would not have rocked. Of course it is really saddening and disgusting to find that the communal harmony so well maintained in Siliguri was all shattered by the some silly remark by an equally silly RJ. But what was more disgusting was the fact that some newspapers had no clue over what they were writing about. The Times of India wrote saying that “the problem that took place in Siliguri was between the Nepali population and the locals” – what locals, who locals?

The Nepali population in Siliguri is as local as any other. Ok for the sake of these misinformed so called reporter of National newspapers, lets place some facts – L.S.S.O'Malley who compiled the Bengal State Gazetteers-Darjeeling, which was published in 1907-wrote “The only other places of importance beside Darjeeling are Siliguri & Kalimpong, the former being a village of some 384 souls in the Terai and the later having a population of over 1000 inhabitants. The former is a swampy malarious village close to the foot of the hills.....”.

It is further mentioned in a research paper (1967) authored by a certain Dr A.K. Chattoraj, that the original inhabitants of Siliguri most probably were an Adhivasi tribe. The same research paper further mentions that one of the earliest reasons for Siliguri growing in population was that many Nepali tea plantation workers unable to adjust to the extremely cold climate of Darjeeling came down the hills to settle in Siliguri. So who is local??

Anyway, Prashant also rocked the economic status & Dasai in the Hills. Everyone seemed to have spent so much on voting for Prashant that it seemed they had very little cash left to have a proper Dasai. Dasai too got rocked in a way- why?? Well if you think that two "Phulpati processions" coming out in Darjeeling on the same day to celebrate the same occasion is not rocking, then what is rocking??

Now lets come to the main point that this column is trying to address, there was another thing that was rocking while Prashant was rocking - and sadly Prashants rocking camouflaged the rocking of the rocks on the rocky hills we call our home - if you did not understand my rocking language, let me say it is a less rocking language - I mean to say that the Prashant episode managed to side track the very grave and extremely serious issue of landslides in the region. Five people were buried alive in Kalimpong alone - eleven in the region - isn't this something that all of us should have been concerned about?? Well if we are not then we better be because of the simple reason that our very existence is at stake. I risk being called an alarmist but the fact is that we are virtually standing on a roller skates that too on a downward slope and that too without any brakes. What happened to T.B. Subba his wife Sukmit of Sukbir Khani, Kamal Tiruwa and his daughter Shetal of Mongol Busty and Shanti Chettri of Chota Bhalukhop this year could happen to you & me in the coming year. And if you were too busy to know what happened to the above five people then let me enlighten you that they were buried alive under at least ten feet of mud, gravel and stones that swept away their homes and with it, their lives.

In a research paper prepared by a young dynamic girl of Kalimpong, named Sushma (sorry I won't give you her Surname) who is a perfect combination of beauty and brains, she has detailed the places in Kalimpong which are in danger of being hit by landslides. She has named the following places - and mind you



photo: Chinlop Phudong



photo: Chinlop Phudong

**Five people were burried alive in Kalimpong alone - eleven in the region - isn't this something that all of us should have been concerned about??**

Bidyang, Bhangay, Yogda Bimbong, Lolay Ground, Khaling, Lower Tugung, Lower Pakang, Gitkolbong, Bong Passabong, Kazi Compound Near Baghdara, Near S.S.B. Office Below Children's Faith Home bordering Gurung Gaon, Upper Bong Busty, Butchery Area near A.M.C. Unit, Upper Chibbo near GRPF and M.E.S. Offices and the Chibbo Church Area.

After going thought the list I wonder which other area under Kalimpong Sub-Division is left to be classified as safe from Landslides. It appears every area in Kalimpong is landslide prone.

Now this leaves us with three options No.1 make our way down to Siliguri, bag and baggage, despite the risk of being called an outsider there or No.2 - stay put and do nothing about it and wait for the next monsoons to see our property and life being swept down the slopes by one of the numerous landslide or No.3 - do something to stem the damage.

If you love the place - you will close the last option - and what can you do?? Well you can at least stop using plastic, you can at least ensure that your drain water is flowing down the right channel, you can see that the jhora next to your property is not clogged and more importantly you can come out on the street and shout your voice hoarse till the Netas and the Babus realize that its now time to act. □



# Prashant Phenomenon, Darjeeling Hills & Sixth Schedule

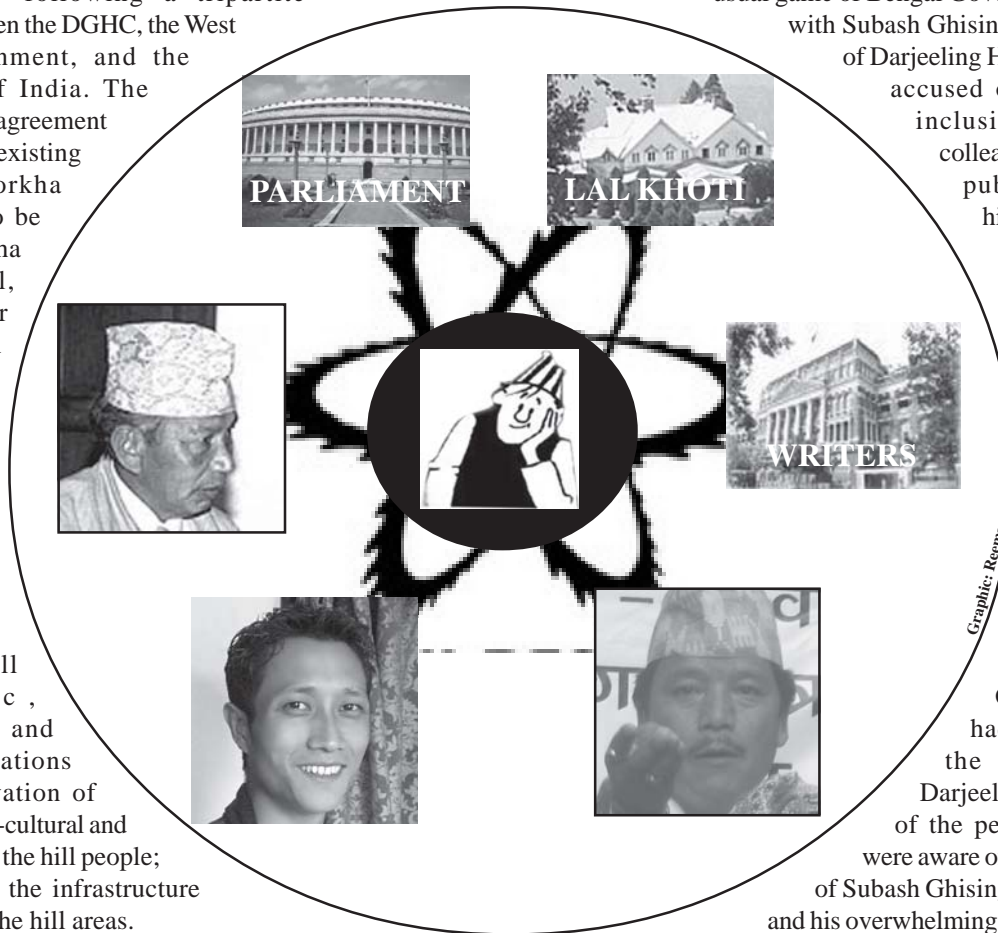
**A** new chapter to the history of Darjeeling hills was added on the December 6, 2005 following a tripartite agreement between the DGHC, the West Bengal Government, and the Government of India. The objective of this agreement is to replace the existing Darjeeling Gorkha Hills Council to be known as Gorkha Hill Council, Darjeeling, under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India after due consultative, legislative and constitutional processes by the State and Central Governments, so as to fulfill economic, educational and linguistic aspirations and the preservation of land-rights, socio-cultural and ethnic identity of the hill people; and to speed up the infrastructure development in the hill areas.

In the last two years the draft Sixth Schedule Bill for Darjeeling hills has been dissected, analysed and examined by several critics including the academicians, journalists and general public. It has been found that there is hardly any difference between what the Council was before and what it is proposed to be by the draft Bill except the constitutional recognition for the DGHC. The Bill proposes only some minor changes here and there and revision of electoral representation in the updated Council. Many political analysts maintain that the Sixth Schedule drama is nothing more than Ghising's ploy

to delay further the long overdue DGHC election in the region and safeguard his chair. Still others lament that it was just the usual game of Bengal Government in collusion with Subash Ghising against the people of Darjeeling Hills. Ghising is also accused of his act of non-inclusion of his council colleagues and the general public of Darjeeling hills before he agreed upon to the draft Sixth Schedule prepared by the Government of West Bengal.

Importantly, the draft Bill was gathering dust in New Delhi for about two years. Both the Government of West Bengal and Government of India had long understood the dynamics of Darjeeling hills and nature of the people therein. They were aware of the mystic presence of Subash Ghising in Darjeeling Hills and his overwhelming popular image in the area. Hence, they never took heed of the

fragmented oppositions and voices of the members of civil society against the toothless Sixth Schedule provisions offered by the Bengal Government to the region. The lopsided and opportunist opposition parties within Darjeeling Hills had tried tooth and nail to mobilize the general public against the draft Sixth Schedule Bill but were seldom successful in their venture. Notably, the general public of Darjeeling Hills under the leadership of Professor Mahendra P. Lama had prepared and submitted an alternative and drastically updated Sixth Schedule provisions to the Government of India and Bengal Government long back in



Graphic: Reeng





opposition to the Sixth Schedule provisions prepared by the West Bengal and signed by Ghising. In fact, Professor Lama has time and again highlighted in various public forums that Sixth Schedule as such is not a bad proposition for Darjeeling Hills. However, the degree and extent of provisions within the Schedule and the way in which these provisions are formulated becomes critical for the sustainable future of the region and its people. According to him, if Darjeeling efficiently negotiates with the government and brings the right kind of Sixth Schedule to the region the same will be the stepping stone towards the Statehood for Darjeeling hills.



Not surprising, New Delhi timely smelled the uncongenial situation for Subash Ghising in Darjeeling hills and the gradual popular mobilization against him. Consequently, the Government of India in connivance with West Bengal Government hurriedly called upon the cabinet meeting and approved the Sixth Schedule status for

Darjeeling Hills on October 1, 2007. As intended by the New Delhi, the focus in Darjeeling hills suddenly again shifted from Prashant to Sixth Schedule and as wanted by the Centre and State Government Ghising has again been temporarily lucky. Why did the Centre play Sixth Schedule card at this very moment is one of the most pertinent questions that we need to seek answer for. By doing so the Government of India and West Bengal did two significant tasks for them. First, they have temporarily saved Subash Ghising from the onslaught of the general mass who otherwise is exasperated by his recent attitude. Secondly and more importantly, they understood the fact that if they do not play the Sixth Schedule card right now the future of their man was seemingly bleak and the already mobilized mass would not at any cost settle for Sixth Schedule provisions prepared by West Bengal. In short, the frightening demand by Darjeeling to the Government of West Bengal, a separate Statehood for the people of Darjeeling hills would crop up once again had the Government of India not played the game at the right time and both New Delhi and Calcutta did not want that to happen.

The recent Prashant phenomenon suddenly changed the socio-political matrix of Darjeeling hills. Not a single political party or personality (Except GNLF and Subash Ghising) could mobilise the members of civil society in Darjeeling Hills over the years as Prashant Phenomenon did. People in Darjeeling hills were so deeply involved and emotionally charged with the Prashant factor that a word against Prashant and his voice was enough to set fire to the emotions of general public. Everybody explicitly supported Prashant in Darjeeling-Sikkim and its neighbouring regions and sang his glory. However, Subash Ghising kept tight-lipped all through the Indian Idol Programme. His silence through out the musical show and his non-utterance in support of the local boy gradually added fuel to the emotions of the general mass. Fortunately, Prashant emerged victorious in the grand finale. The civil society particularly in Darjeeling hills has united once again from its fragmentation and is tremendously disappointed with the attitude of Subash Ghising. Today, the socio-political environment has become exceedingly fragile in Darjeeling hills. Perhaps the tide may at anytime flow against the interest of Subash Ghising and his associates. In deed, the Prashant phenomenon has created a pan-Nepali sentiment across various linguistic groups of Nepali society within and outside India.

However, mention should be made here that there is still a sizeable chunk of people in Darjeeling hills including general public, intellectuals, and political leaders who are not happy with the toothless provisions under the Sixth Schedule to be granted to the region if the bill is passed in the parliament [expectedly by the end of the year]. The political situation in Darjeeling hills is still relatively fragile and it will be critical to witness the newer developments on the south of the great Rangit River in near future. □

**Your Views, Poems, Articles and suggestions may be sent to**

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Photo: Sandip C. Jain

# THE SILENT DISASTER

On 7 September, 2007, the rains STOPPED and we were saved just inches short of a phenomenal disaster... writes Wg Cdr Praful Rao

In Oct 1968 after four days of intense, incessant rain the Teesta bridge was swept away, hundreds died and for a historic first time, Kalimpong was marooned, necessitating IAF helicopters to drop food packets.

Unlike then- when we hit the world headlines with the international media screaming about the calamity which had engulfed us, in September 2007 the disaster went largely unnoticed – I call it the silent disaster.

There were no helicopters this time, nothing as dramatic as a huge bridge disappearing really happened and thank god, only a few died in the district!

Yet as if in a science fiction movie, silently entire mountains cracked up, quietly villages and paddy fields slid

down, roads got washed away and buildings and mud houses crumbled while an entire populace sat mesmerized by the Indian Idol reality show (the Prashant Tamang phenomenon.).

On 7 September, 2007, the rains **STOPPED** and we were saved just inches short of a phenomenal disaster.

How many believe that?

The silent disaster is therefore largely unknown to most people in Kalimpong, let alone the national media. The director of a prominent NGO from Kalimpong who toured some of the areas with me had reported the seriousness of the matter and our website to his head office. Alas, the response from the head office was, "Since nothing has been reported by the media or the government, how are we to believe what is on the website?"

So unknown to most, we have around us examples of virtually every type of landslide in the world!

- At Soureni, below Deolo we have rock slides which threaten to snuff out an entire village.
- Chibo, Dalapchand, and 14<sup>th</sup> mile, euphemistically called "sinking areas", are places where land slides are inching down year by year and relentlessly dragging entire bustees into the Relli and Teesta.
- At Sangsay phatak an entire hill side is peeling off.
- Alaichikhop village, of course had a slide where 20 odd years of filthy garbage, mud and rocks exploded onto a village- which now



Photo: Sandip C. Jain

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must be one of the most polluted places on earth.

- Kankebung is a village which has numerous deep fissures.
- Then there are those mammoth ones in Bara Bhalukhop, Leprosy colony and Bhagey Sangsay which originate virtually at the ridge tops and terminate at the Teesta river valley, each easily more than 3000 feet long.
- Pashyor village is also cracking up.
- The most fertile farmlands of Kalimpong in Sindebong are crashing into *jhoras* at an alarming rate.

But even more alarming is the regrettable apathy firstly amongst us and then amongst the people who are responsible to rectify and correct the damage done, the State apparatus and the DGHC.

The point is we were lucky this time. But will we get a second chance? Will these wounded mountains and fractured hills survive the deluge of the next monsoons without our help?

Listen to the Vellore Declaration 2006 on Indian landslides (Vellore Institute of Technology)

"Many types of landslides could be avoided or prevented and catastrophes averted through instrumentation, vigil, healthy slope management practices and landslide education".

Listen again PM's inaugural address in the First Disaster Management Conference 2006, New Delhi.

"I do believe that the time has come for a paradigm shift in disaster management from a "relief-centric" and "post-event" response, to a regime that lays greater emphasis on preparedness, prevention and mitigation. Such an approach should place emphasis on improving early warning systems, ensuring the reach and efficacy of dissemination, (of information) creating awareness and building capacities at all levels of public administration."

Lastly, the Disaster Management Act 2005, clarifies that "Disaster Management" means a continuous and integrated process of planning, organizing, coordinating and implementing measures which are necessary or expedient for

- preventing danger or threat of any disaster;
- mitigation or reduction of risk of any disaster or its severity or consequences;
- capacity-building;
- preparedness to deal with any disaster;
- prompt response to any threatening disaster situation or disaster;
- assessing the severity or magnitude of effects of any disaster;
- evacuation, rescue and relief
- rehabilitation and reconstruction.

# LANDSLIDES

Yet despite the Vellore declaration, the PM's directive and the Disaster Management Act all underlining the importance of taking preventive measures, I for one am sure that six months from now, the monsoons will batter us again with hardly any serious action being to mitigate an impending disaster. The lack of awareness and concern extends from us, the public who want to wish the whole thing away to the highest level of the state administration and the DGHC.

As I write today (6Nov2007) a six-member central team led by R.P. Nath, the Joint Secretary (administration) in the Ministry of Home Affairs with representatives from the Planning Commission and the Finance Ministry as well as Departments of Land Resources, Road Transport and Drinking Water Supply are touring Sikkim to assess the damage done there by the September 2007 rains. Assuming the damage is equal if not

worse in Darjeeling district just who has made a wholesome assessment of the devastation here? Why did the Central team not include the adjacent areas of Darjeeling district in their survey since we lie on the same geographical belt as Sikkim and the monsoons certainly did not distinguish between Darjeeling district and Sikkim?

For days I have trudged up and down hillsides or driven around Kalimpong in a bid to map the extent of damage caused in the early September 2007 rains. I am truly alarmed by the overall ruin and the sheer scale at which it has happened. What I am sure of is that if in the future, the rains are of the same intensity as this year (and what with global warming we may safely assume it will be more not less intense) and IF we do not take any proactive measures to prevent landslides now, we will certainly hit the world news headlines and again for all the wrong reasons.

In September 2007, during the Indian idol episode, we in the hills saw a mass social movement unlike anything that was witnessed for a decade or more; it is lamentable that we lack the will to do anything on one hundredth that scale even when it concerns something so vital as our land, our future and our survival.

Regrettably, the time available to identify critical hazard prone landslide areas and commence preventive work on a war footing is only now, in the dry season but even as I write, vital time is ticking away with no sign of any action.... □

**A complete coverage of the silent disaster with photographic evidence is given in our website <http://www.savethehills.blogspot.com>**

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## **Hon. Mary H.H. Scott** **(1877 – 1964)**

Dr. D.C. Roy

Among the dedicated personalities whose memory has been deleted from Kalimpong and Gangtok and has been kept in the recycle bin, Hon. Mary H.H. Scott is prominently one of them. The present article is a modest attempt to resave some tit bit memories about Mary Scott collected from here and there as ready reference for the present and future generations.

Honourable Mary Hepburne Scott, D.D., D.C.S., K.I.H., was born in Humble, Midlothian, Scotland in 1877. She was the daughter of the Eighth Lord Polwarth of Mertoun. After completing her school education, Mary Scott joined the Deaconess House in Edinburgh for training in Biblical Studies. From her childhood she was very much interested in the missionary work and in the people of India. She joined the Women's Guild under the Church of Scotland and sailed for India with Rev. J. A. Graham and Mrs. Graham on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1905.

Mary Scott started her service in Kalimpong by accepting the honorary Mission Appointment in 1905 and took voluntary retirement from her dedicated service in 1955 by handing over her blind school to Salvation Army. In between she served downtrodden girls and women of Sikkim. Based on her area of action and time period, Mary Scott's service and contribution can be discussed under three phases:

## A. Missionary Service in Kalimpong : 1905 – 1923.

In 1905 Mary Scott volunteered herself as a member of Women's Guild formed by the Church of Scotland in 1888. She dedicated herself for the cause of God and Christ and offered herself to serve as Woman's Guild Missionary. She extended her voluntary social service during the initial phase of the missionary work in Kalimpong. Her contemporaries were Miss Macfarlane, Mrs. Graham and others. She worked during the transitional period when Kalimpong was fast changing in the fields of education, healthcare and evangelization. Macfarlane Memorial Church (1890), Charteris Hospital (1894), Girl's High School (1905), SUMI (1887), Lace Factory (1907), Industrial School, Girls Hostel – all had started more or less at the same time and for which a large number of human hands were needed. A good number of persons contributed but Mary Scott did splendid work and for which she is still remembered by the people of the area. "For four years out of nine, during which she had been at Kalimpong, she gave splendid service without fee or reward." (D.G. Manuel: 1914: 139)

Miss Mary Scott started her service as a temporary Superintendent of the Girls Hostel but she never confined herself within the four walls of the hostel and used to move around the villages and forest dwellers to bring girls for training and education.

During those periods people living in the village and forest areas were suffering from frequent epidemics. Small pox, malaria, influenza, cholera etc were some of the diseases which in the form of an epidemic took hundreds of life. However, she was never satisfied with the variety of assignments given to her because she wanted a specific work where she could devote herself fully and shape it accordingly.

As recognition of her dedicated service to the common people in the fields of nursing and hospitality, Govt of India honoured her by conferring on her **Kaisar – I – Hind** gold medal.

## B. Missionary Service in Gangtok : 1923 – 1939.

The Scottish missionaries who settled in Darjeeling and Kalimpong (1870) took twenty years to get Royal permission to enter in Sikkim (1889). The first mission station was selected at Chidam, South Sikkim and Rev. Mackean took the charge in 1901 followed by Rev. Duncan for two years until Rev. Mackean rejoined and continued his service up to 1921. She could manage to get the permission to construct a Church in Gangtok in 1936. This was the first Church in Sikkim and was constructed by Mary Scott in the traditional Lepcha –Tibetan style.



For a long time Miss Mary Scott was the only white lady in Sikkim and it was so much so that she was known in the country by name and letter could reach to her if posted only by her name. She took special interest in uplifting the girls and women in Sikkim.

Miss Mary Scott was the founder of Scottish Mission Nepali Girls High School which later has been renamed Paljor Namgyal Girls School, Gangtok. She was the key person in establishing a number of primary schools in rural areas and took care of the health for the rural women with the aim of making them self sufficient. Auntie Mary taught knitting and craft work to the girls and women. Those

who got basic education subsequently became teachers and those who received nursing training became nurses in rural Sikkim.

Auntie Mary could speak Nepali and always wore Sikkimise dress. She not only had good relation with the royal family and it is told that she had friendship with the queen. She could not have done all those she did without the support of the ruler and the government officials. Due to ill health she could not continue with her missionary service. Her physicians advised her to take rest and not to stay in high altitude.

Once her pony slipped and she fell heavily breaking a rib. It is reported that she also had a cataract. Hon Mary Scott left Gangtok with a living memory of a growing Girls' School, many of village primary schools and dispensaries, large number of congregations and thousands of educated and self sufficient girls and women. Mary Scott took voluntary retirement due to ill health and left Sikkim in 1939.

Miss Mary Scott worked among the downtrodden in whole Sikkim but it is told that she devoted mainly among the Lepchas of Lachhen areas in north Sikkim. In recognition of her devoted and painstaking long service as a missionary in Sikkim, the University of St. Andrews, Scotland conferred on her the honorary degree of **Doctor of Divinity** in 1937. She was the first woman missionary to receive such a prestigious honour.

## C. Service for the Blind in Kalimpong : 1939 – 1955.

After retirement, Hon Mary Scott came back to her old known place, Kalimpong for settlement in 1939. She purchased a small house at 9<sup>th</sup> Mile and named it 'Friendsdale', the present Shakappa House which is at the north of present Blind School.

Her low eye sight started giving her the feeling her for the blind and realizing their problems by heart. She found out the blind and lame children in mission hospital with no future but to beg only. She took some blinds to her home and housed them and thus started a Home for the Blind. She trained herself in the Braille

script and studied crafts for the blind. Officially the home started on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1940 and continued in her Friendsdale until 1949 when the accommodation became insufficient and she had to sell it to buy the present huge land for the construction on cottages with thatched roof.

Initially it was a Home for the blinds where the boys of any age could stay at free of cost for the maximum period of three years. With the purpose of making them self sufficient, there was the system of giving training in cane craft and bamboo craft. After successful training each of them was provided with some tools and cash to start with their independent work. The workshop, constructed as per the model of one of the blind schools in Scotland, was the main place of attraction for all. Besides craft work, workshop was the centre for story telling, humour, laughing, exchanging views, making friendship, and above all experiencing and planning for the future life.

Initially it was planned for a home but later it was extended for school facilities as well. The primary school got recognition during the British period while the junior high section was sanctioned by the government of West Bengal. Students are sent to SUMI, Govt High School, Kalimpong Girls' School for further study. Benjamin Kuzur from Ranchi and Noami from Dehradun were appointed as first gent and lady teachers to teach Braille and cane craft. Four students of the home were sent to Behala School for Braille and craft training and all of them later became teachers of the school. The six students of the first batch were: Man Bahadur Pradhan (Known as Titus), Palman Gurung, Chandra Bir Maji, Jabar Sing Gurung, Krishna Bahadur Rai, and Bir Bahadur Rai.

Funds required for the home were collected from the well wishers including the tea planters, officials, soldiers, local business persons, teachers and staff of Dr Grahams Homes, friends like Maharani of Sikkim and Bhutan. Even today the home accepts all sorts of voluntary donations, supports, gifts from its well wishers. Since long Sri Om Prakash Goyal, Makhan Bhog of Siliguri through Jaydev Agarwal, Ramjilal Bijay Kumar, D.S. Gurung Road Kalimpong, is supplying Sunday breakfast containing bread, jam, jelly, butter and sweets for the blinds. Hon. Mary Scott was a good painter and used to sell her paintings and other craft articles twice a year in the Town hall to collect money for the home. Among the cane and bamboo articles, paper basket, arm chair, suitcase and rope belt were highly demanded in the local market. The trainees were remunerated for their products.

The increasing number of students and boarders increased the amount of expenditure for running the home. New construction remained due for long period. Money so raised from voluntary

donations and gifts was neither regular nor sufficient for the home. Her old age became another obstacle in raising fund. Auntie Mary started approaching different institutions and organizations, both government and non government, for taking over the home. Most officials and dignitaries who visited Kalimpong were arranged to pay a visit to the home and have a ground experience of the need of the blinds. A committee of management was formed with the then Governor of West Bengal as the patron. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru during his visit at Kalimpong spent some time among the blinds in 1952 and mentioned the need of help in the Visitor's Book. Dr. B.C.Roy, the then Chief Minister of the state made a

physical verification of the condition of the home. All were sympathetic and realized the necessity of taking over the home but nothing materialized until Salvation Army responded positively and adopted it from 28<sup>th</sup> February 1955 and continued to do so till date.

After handing over her dream home to Salvation Army, Hon. Mary Scott stayed at a rented house in 9<sup>th</sup> Mile for three years. Then she returned in poor health to Scotland where she died on 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1964 at the age of eighty seven.

The home has been renamed as 'Salvation Army Mary Scott

Home and School for the Blind'. It is now run by the Salvation Army with a regular Superintendent posted by them under the guidance of a local level managing committee. Among the 10<sup>th</sup> Superintendents, Brig Dorothy V. Page (popularly known as Mrs Hamilton in Kalimpong) not only served for a long time (1957 – 1976) but did commendable work for the development of the home in terms of both physical infrastructure and creating efficient human capital. On October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1972, the then Governor A L Dias and on August 25, 1979, Maj General T S Verma separately inaugurated the new buildings for the home. Now it has three separate hostels for the boys and girls; class rooms up to eight standards; workshop for cane and bamboo crafts; residential quarters for Superintendent and other staff members; music room; prayer hall etc.

Music is one of the fields in which the blinds excel themselves. Both boys and girls are prolific players of guitar, congo, harmonium, flute, and drum. One of the main attractions of Independence Day Celebration at Mela Ground, Kalimpong remains the band of Blind School. The Church of the school continued to extend Easter Sunrise Service for the whole of Kalimpong since 1960. During sixties and seventies the students of the school used to perform drama in the local Town hall to entertain the gatherings and thus collected funds for the school. One of the inmates Dal Bahadur Mukhia after completing his degree in music, accepted music as his profession and taught music to the sighted people in Kalimpong. Braille becomes a boon for a good number of students. The school is proud of Dr Imtiaz Ahmed, Dean of the Department of Law,





Calcutta University; Mr. Ershad, Head of the Department of English, Darjeeling Government College; Mr John Dick Khawas, retired Headmaster of the school; Mr Daniel Gyanendra Kr Rongong, retired Assistant teacher of the school; Mr Solemon Birendra Kr Rongong retired assistant teacher of the school and a good number of teachers/ Headmasters of different schools in North Bengal and Sikkim. Both Mr John Dick Khawas and Mr Daniel Gyanendra Kumar Rongong were graduates and trained themselves from Peokino School for the Blinds, Water Town, Messachusetts, USA. After the training from Dehradun, a good number of students of the school become physiotherapists in different hospitals and private nursing homes. To compete

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**Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru during his visit to Kalimpong in 1952 spent some time among the visually impaired students of the school**

with the fast changing world the school started with computer application for the blinds from this year.

Hon Mary Scott was an institution by herself. Wherever she visited, she worked among the poor and socially depressed class who still remember her by heart. She lived a long life and will be remembered by the people of Kalimpong and Sikkim for a much longer time. To materialize her dream, all should come forward and contribute generously for the good cause of the visually challenged students of our society. Auntie Mary, the great humanitarian heart, had started the work and we all should put our joint effort in upholding it for the great good cause of our society.

## Acknowledgments:

1. Maj. Zothanmawire— Superintendent, Mary Scott Home for the Blinds (MSHB), Kalimpong.
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4. Daniel Gyanendra Kr Rongong – Retd Asstt Teacher, MSHB, Kalimpong.
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6. Rev Dr. Kamal Andrew Rai — Mission Compound, Kalimpong.
7. Prof Rinji Namchu — Kalimpong College, Kalimpong.
8. Prof. Chandra Kumar Subba — Kalimpong College, Kalimpong.
9. Mr T.T.Lepcha — Upper Sichey Busty, Gangtok, Sikkim.

With much regret it is being informed that the publication of the Nepali Edition of the Himalayan Times has been discontinued. This is solely due to the fact that it did not receive any Advertisement support from Advertisers in Kalimpong. This, despite the fact that this highly popular magazine had within a very short span of time come to become the leading Nepali local magazine in Kalimpong and had more readership than any other Nepali publication.

All those subscribers who had yearly subscriptions for the magazine are requested to kindly contact the publisher (Phone 9832016738) for a refund of their subscription amount. We regret having to take this decision but the financial constraints on us were severe and hence the publishers had no other options left before them.

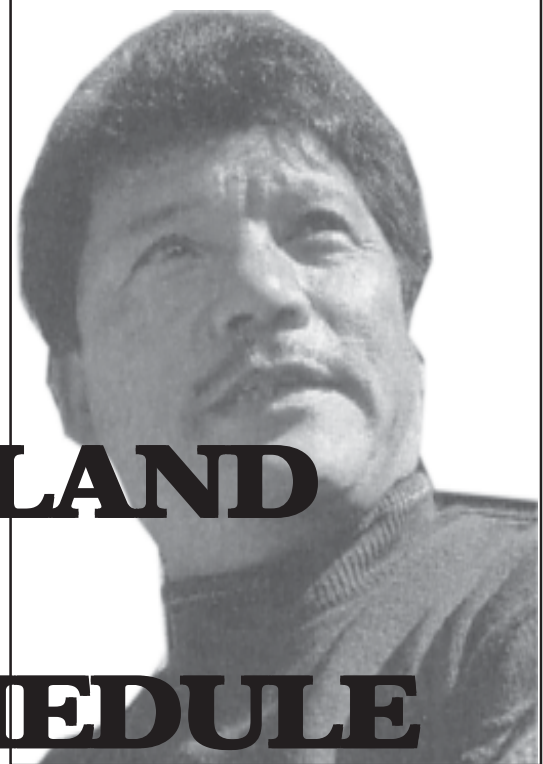
We thank all those who helped us remain in publication till we did.

Sandip C. Jain

Publisher

Himalayan Times(Nepali)





## GORKHALAND OR SIXTH SCHEDULE

**Sandip C. Jain**

**A**lmost twenty long years have passed since that fateful day on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1988, when Mr. Subhas Ghising signed that tripartite agreement in Kolkata accepting the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC). In the period since then, the general public (would cattle be a better word??) has been witness to the charade of first the creation of the DGHC, then the running of the council as someone's personal fiefdom and then the condemnation of the Council into the bottom of the nearest litter-bin available around Lal Khoti.

That the formation of the DGHC was a useless piece of legislature not even worth the paper it was signed upon was there to be seen from day one itself but what took Mr. Ghising so long to realize the uselessness of the same will remain the biggest mystery of the last two decades. Voices of protest were heard from the first day itself when the charismatic and popular Chatray Subba revolted against Ghising forming his own Gorkha Liberation Organization. C.K.Pradhan, Tsheten Sherpa, N.T.Moktan, R.P.Waiba, D.K.Pradhan and others from within the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) raised voices of

dissent at different times against the DGHC and its functioning but their voices were silenced- some of them permanently. Madan Tamang, R.B.Rai, Dawa Norbula and others from the other side of the political spectrum tried constantly to mobilize the masses against the DGHC and the failed political process in the Hills, but to no avail. What all the politicians failed to do was ultimately done by a singer- Prashant Tamang. The mass frenzy that he managed to evoke became the wave atop which his unofficial campaign manager in chief, Mr. Bimal Gurung, rode to the top of the Hill popularity Charts.

The hitherto seeming invincibility of the GNLF and its supremo suddenly seemed just a myth and today stands shaken to its very roots and to add insult to injury-it has been beaten at its own game- violence, intimidation, bloodshed and brute muscle power being the name of the game. The anti-incumbency factor seems so strong that if this downhill slide in popularity continues for the GNLF- very soon its mention will only be made in the pages of the Political history of Darjeeling. Though, at the moment, to advocate or assume that the GNLF is dead and buried would be a pretty naïve assessment of the situation. It definitely still does have support in several pockets and amongst many sections of the society- it definitely is down but very definitely not out. For the better of the future of the Hills, Subhas Ghising's party has to survive and survive in strength, even if just so that the Bimal Gurung of today does not become the Subhas Ghising of tomorrow- after all Bimal Gurung has graduated from the same school in which Ghising was the Headmaster.

For the moment, the debate rages on- Gorkhaland or Sixth Schedule- whosoever wins is now actually immaterial because Darjeeling and its entire Gorkha population has already lost. The unity, the brotherhood, the camaraderie, solidarity and the

cohesiveness that the Gorkha population exhibited during the Prashant episode, now stands in tatters. One thing is certain, with the division of the Hill population on political lines, the road towards the ultimate goal and aspirations of the Gorkhas- i.e. Gorkhaland- now has more pot-holes than ever before. Those opposing the creation of Gorkhaland, the State and the Central government, now have another stick to beat off our legitimate demand.

And before this column concludes may I take the liberty of asking Mr. Ghising and Mr. Gurung one single question? If yes, then I would love to ask them why Gorkhaland or why Sixth Schedule??? "For the development of the Hill population" will definitely be their answer!! But then isn't Peace the single most important ingredient for development?? If it really is development they are fighting for then peace should be their mantra. They can do their politics, they have every right to, after all it is their bread and butter, but it would serve the Hills better if the politics they do is indulged in through ideas in the head rather than with khukuris in the hand!!! ▣

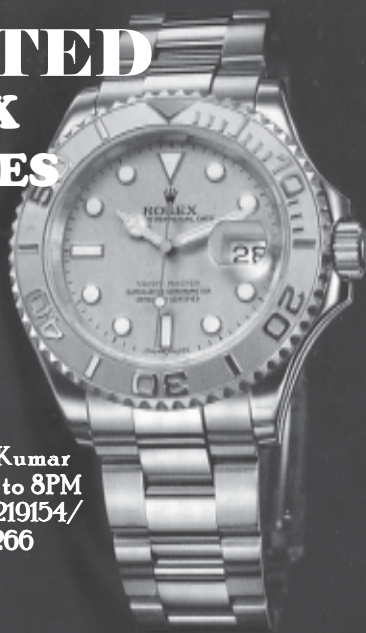
## FUTURE OF KALIMPONG

N E H A R I K A  
M A N G R A T I  
2 1 D E C E M B E R  
2 0 0 6



Bhai don't worry!!!  
The crowd is just  
going home for  
lunch and will be  
back by the time  
you finish your  
speech

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## IN RESPECTFUL HOMAGE

(Late) Lt. Col. A.B.Chettry (Retd)

October 22, 1914- August 22, 2004

*Paying homage to  
A Caring Husband  
A Loving Father  
and an Indomitable Soldier  
on his  
3rd death anniversary*

Fondly remembered by

Luxmi Chettry  
(Wife)

Anil Chettry  
(Son)

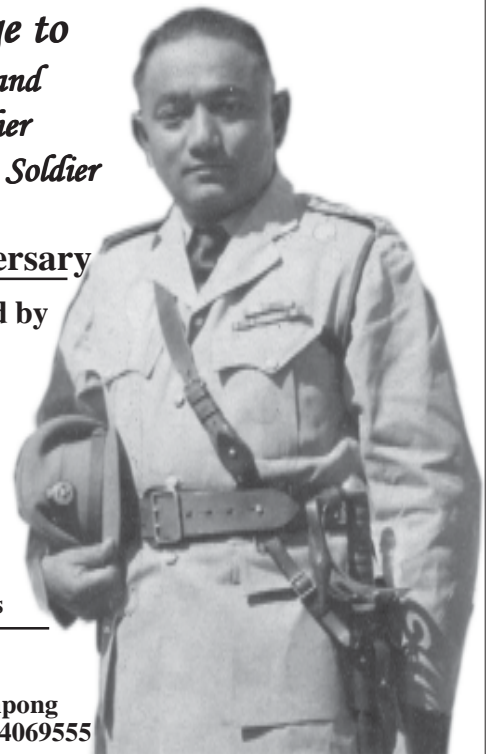
Huma Chettry  
(Daughter in law)

Veedhya Chettry  
(Grand Daughter)

Relatives & Friends

Residence  
Nirvana

H.L.Dixit Road, Kalimpong  
Phone 03552-256804, 9434069555



# BEYOND DEATH HE LIVES

## Baba Harbhajan

By Sheetal Pradhan

**H**e has defeated death. Believe it or not but it is true, one of its kind of story in the world- a man from an Indian army in a Nathula border is still doing his duty even after his death some three decades back.

60km from Gangtok towards the panoramic view of the Nathula landscape a road leads towards the valley of Kupup. Here is the shrine of Baba Harbhajan popularly known as Baba Mandir. Baba Harbhajan has been guarding the international boundary of the two Asian giants the China and India over the last three decades. But believe me he does it alone. Even the army men on the other side of the international wall confirms that they had seen a man riding a horse all alone patrolling the border.

Born in Brondal village of Kapurthala, Punjab Harbhajan Singh joined the 23<sup>rd</sup> Punjab Battalion on February 1966 as sepoy. The year of 1968 when the states of Sikkim and North Bengal was under the rage of great natural catastrophic where landslides, floods and heavy rain had taken thousands of lives across the two states. On October 4 1968 sepoy Harbhajan Singh was escorting a mule caravan from his battalion headquarters in Tekula to Dengchukla, he fell into a fast flowing stream and drowned. Search for Sepoy Harbhajan was made with no results it was on the fifth day of the missing, his colleague Pritam Singh had a dream of Harbhajan Singh informing him of his tragic incident and his dead body being found under the heap of snows. Harbhajan Singh desired to have a samadhi made after him. Pritam Singh ignored the dream as just as an imagination but later when the body of Sepoy Harbhajan Singh was found at the spot where Harbhajan Singh had informed the army official was taken aback and to mark respect and towards his wish a samadhi was constructed near Chhokya Chho.

Baba Harbhajan Singh warns the dangerous activities on the border through the dreams of fellow army men. Even Chinese army men believe to have seen a human figure doing patrolling in the night across the border. Baba Harbhajan Singh is today honoured the rank of Honorary Captain and his samadhi reconstructed at the junction of Kupup Gnathang road and the pathway leading to Menmoichu Lake as apart of the watershed memorial complex. Baba used to get his salary for the defense funds that were send to his family but due to some reason it has been stopped now.





# HAPPY NEW YEAR 1958

The New Year's Day heralding 1958 was a memorable one for all those who attended the party hosted by the Edwards near the junction of Hooker Road and the Lebong Cart Road where they used to live. The living room was gaily decorated with streamers, balloons, pompoms, confetti and blinking lights. It was party full of music, laughter, singing, dances, and lots of goodies to munch throughout the evening but no wine. It didn't matter being young we were high without the assistance of any fermented juice. Amber Gurung displayed his keyboard skills and compositions on the harmonium, Kapil Raj played the violin like an extension of his own body, I merrily strummed the guitar with the latest Elvis and Chuck Berry numbers. We all danced the Bhagwandas steps on C. Ramchandra's combination Rumba-Samba tune of 'Gorey-gorey'. Amber Gurung's group song 'Ritu Ramailo' in Samba was a hit. We were all young, I was the Mile and Half Mile champion of North Point School and College and Half-mile champion (civil) of the District, for me the atmosphere was electric. Life in those days was so

much joy, fun and unconditional love among friends. At the stroke of midnight we greeted each other and shook hands as the New Year dawned. I also shook hands with a beautiful young girl for the first time and it was a great feeling. It lasts for life; strangely I never met her again. We sang many songs deep into the night and after a delicious and sumptuous meal we bid goodbye to our kind hosts happy and elated.



The most feared ghost was the one that operated just below the Basanti Annex on the Hill Cart road. It was the 'Come hither ghost' which mesmerized people into a stupefying trance

By Nayan Subba

I lived at Nimki-danra and I had to cover a distance of about three kilometers from Mr. Edward's place. Darjeeling had a large number of ghosts in the 50's. There were quite a few on the stretch near the old cemetery, some on the Lochnagar road when early one Sunday morning in 1876 a lightning struck a Sapper's arsenal which exploded and killed the entire guard. One extremely tall guy was often seen near the public toilet on the eastern side of Municipal building 'K'. An illustrious 'Khaini de bhoot', a ghost who demanded khaini (chewing

tobacco) moved around Bokshi jhora (Witch's stream). Taxi drivers plying late on this route invariably carried khaini; it had to be thrown outside to appease the tormentor. The most feared one operated just below the Basanti Annex on the Hill Cart road. It was the 'Come hither ghost' which mesmerized people into a stupefying trance. Amber and Kapil wanted to escort me at up to Maryville but in a spurt of bravado I waived their offer and proceeded alone. It must have been 1.30 am when I reached Victoria Jhora Bridge (Saraswati immersion ghat); the night seemed to intensify as great waves of alto cumulous clouds spread across the sky. Winter had set in and there was chill in the air. In 1958 there was no habitation from the stretch between Mr. C.B.Pradhan's house at Kakjhora right up to Maryville where Mr. Gagan Gurung a well-known music composer lives. Halfway between is the Basanti Annex a hospital just above the road. As I proceeded something deep inside began to waver, it was perhaps a deep primal fear of the unknown. As I went past the Burdwan gate road crossing the silence was so deafening I could hear the echo of my leather heeled sole on the railway tracks going Ping! Ping! Ping! Deep down in the valley dogs were barking which penetrated the air. I could hear

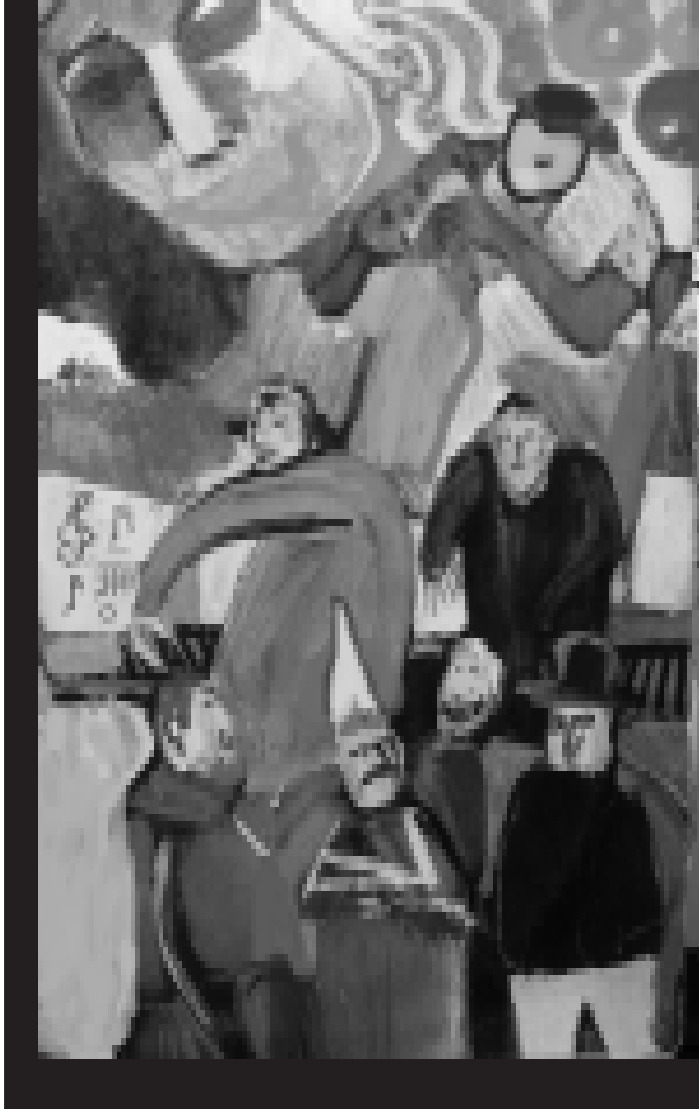
the thumps of my heartbeats growing louder and going out of control. I called in all available strength and courage and sang a song on my guitar to boost up my morale. I was never so nervous before. In such a situation no amount of education and courage will help to eradicate ghosts and superstition. For no perceptible reason I suddenly stopped singing. I glanced ahead, a strange sixth sense instinct warned me that there was



# HAPPY NEW YEAR 1958

an alien presence; the road was full of dappled shadows, far off around the bend I catch a faint movement just near the junction of the Basanti Annex road crossing. I said to myself, "This is it, my worst fears have come true, I've met a ghost!" It was incredible, I was petrified, breathing hard, I couldn't believe it, it was a trance like situation! The standards of bravery and courage are pretty high among hill men but when it comes to a ghost or a specter I am afraid the ratings are abysmally low. I couldn't turn tail and flee towards town for I had no where to go, so I took the primitive way of dealing with adversaries, throw stones. Throw stones I did with all gusto towards the apparition. The shadow stepped back in alacrity and shouted Hey! Hey! Stop throwing stones, it's me! It's me! I was immensely relieved. I looked hard and saw the figure of a man, I moved towards him. He was a lean man with deep-set eyes and crow's feet, a thin nose with some peculiarities and an indescribable look of scorn in his face. He mildly

chided me for walking at such an unearthly hour and to be careful not to hurt others by throwing stones. I apologized and left the scene greatly assuaged, I went past the "Come hither" ghost point without any incident. The "Come hither" spectre had once spooked Mr. Gagan Gurung who was traumatized and taken ill for two months. It could have been a hallucination but he doesn't tell lies. I reached Maryville where a dog bared its fangs on me, I walked quickly but one thing kept striking me, the man whom I had met went down the steps



of Lhasa Villa softly and silently like a butterfly, it didn't seem real! I reached home at last only to receive a thorough dressing down from my granddad which still rings in my ears and made me forget everything. No hard feelings, he was a good man and it was a case of genuine concern, no cell phones like today.

Darjeeling in 1958 was lots of smiles and greetings, the mountains could be seen from everywhere, people could go to the market without locking up their doors, the Police marched smartly for the change of guards in the Town-beats, public toilets were clean, tap water was potable, teachers and elders were well respected and by 6 PM the streets were empty. One could talk on the phone

line for a long time even if there was a cross connection. The Independence Day Parade was held at the Bazaar square. Austin A 40s (Devon), Studebakers, Fords, Chevrolets, Opels and Humbers could be seen at the Club side Motors. The old colonial hang over had not quite gone, the beautiful Christmas air and New years bash were regular features. The revelry of Dassain and Tihar, the sound of madals and Damphus (folk instruments), Nepali Folksongs and Marigolds, Roti ping (Ferries wheel) and Lingay pings (giant swings) and glorious inebriations warmed the cockles of the heart. Gorgeously dressed Tibetan ladies singing in high pentatonic scales in Losar, the Muharrum celebrations, horse racing in Lebong, football, hockey, momos and Chang were all a part of the composite culture in Darjeeling. Since Darjeeling was still the 'The Queen of hill stations' one never felt better in taking a walk around the Mall with gusts of wind souging silently through the tall pine trees, the sight of mountains, the nymphs and Pan softly playing his flute over the trees specially for those who were in love and wearing the rose of youth in them.

A week later after my encounter with the man that night I saw the same person coming towards me near Deochand's shop below the Bazaar Post Office. I greeted him with the traditional Darjeeling half salute and I profusely apologized again for my rash act that night. I couldn't have mistaken him for another man, he had the same thin nose, same scorn on his face and the same peculiarities but strangely he pleaded ignorance about the incident, looked quite sincere and said that no such a thing had ever happened to him. He shrugged and took departure. So was it a sprite, ghost, spirit, elf, spirit, demon or a disembodied soul? Or was it a mischievous adventure of the fair kind?

Have you any suggestions? □



# Kasto Mazza Hai Rail Lai Ma..... English Style

By Priyanka Sharma

What does someone in Britain do when he feels like sipping “chai” sitting on the window of our Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) at Sukna? He creates a Sukna and takes the Toy Train there.

For a handful of British steam fanatics, it is as simple as this. Long distance and heavy expenditure coming in the way of frequent travel to India, the Brits have found this rather amusing way of bonding with the DHR.

It was in the summer of 2005 when they first gave shape to the “expansive thought”—they blame it on the Indian beer—that first came to their mind when they were aboard the DHR during one of their trips. Paul Lewin, general manager of harbour station of Ffestiniog Railway, had—reportedly, after the third pint of beer—exclaimed: “What the heck! Take Minffordd station complete and turn it into Sukna!”. Not surprisingly, members of Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Society, a UK-based organization, were simply quick to grab the idea.

They had the Minfford station of Ffestiniog, a narrow-gauge steam railway of Wales, turned into our very own Sukna station. True to any Indian railway station, it had signs in Hindi and English and bazaar selling Indian tidbits; with gorasahibs, dressed in sherwanis and kurta-pyjamas, selling chai and samosas. In 2006, Sukna was “recreated” ditto at Bedfordshire of the Leighton Buzzard Railway, another narrow-gauge steam railway in Wales.

And last August, the third reincarnation of Sukna took place at the Fairbourne station of Fairbourne Railway (FR), also in Wales. This time with a difference: the DHR was in its half-size replica.

FR is a miniature railway in Wales with tracks laid on a gauge of approximately 1ft. The DHR runs on narrow gauge, which is 2ft wide. Most locomotives of the Fairbourne Railway are half-size replicas of engines running on famous narrow-gauge railways. Sherpa, the DHR-replica locomotive is the only non-British one.

“It was a veritable riot of colours,” David Barrie, chairman of DHRS said. “The weather was great and everyone had a lot of fun; we raised over £200 for charitable projects at Darjeeling and the ticket revenue broke almost all records.”

Organised over the two-day “Bank Holiday Weekend” from August 26, DHR-fanatics in UK had converted the Fairbourne station into Sukna station, complete with railway signs (in both Hindi and English), prayer flags, Indian bazaar and DHR members dressed in Indian attires not just vending “chai”, but also polishing shoes. Sherpa, decorated with wreathes of saipatri (marigold) also offered special joy-rides to enthusiasts. Besides, there were special curry meals and DHR shows.

Signs like “photography prohibiteted”—complete with spelling mistakes that are so common in India—rendered authenticity

to the setting. Then there were signboards saying “Hurry Burry Spoils the Curry”, “Donate blood in the blood bank and not on the roads” and “better be late Mr Motorist than the Late Mr Motorist”, which are straight from the warnings that line the steep and winding National Highway 55 between Siliguri and Siliguri.

Is it possible to think of India and not talk of Bollywood? To render the masala complete was Bollywood actor Mayur, famous child actor known his roles of child Amitabh Bachchan in hits like Muqadar ka Sikandar and Sharabi. He is settled with his family in Wales at present and all had turned up at the event. Several other Indian families also attended the meet.

Barrie said the event was the second-most popular event in the UK’s history of steam fanaticism so far. “The Sunday of the two-day event was the second busiest day in the railway’s history (Fairbourne railway), only missing out on the top spot by £400,” Barrie, who is the chairman of both DHRS and Fairbourne Railway Society, said.

“The most popular event was ‘Thomas the Tank Engine’ event when the engines wear faces just like the engines in the books,” Barrie added.

Not just fun and more popularity for the DHR, the event had a higher cause too. “We were raising money for a number of causes—the Fairbourne Railway so they can upgrade the accommodation where the volunteers who work on the line as a hobby can stay, the Royal National Lifeboat Association who go out to save lives on stormy seas and the DHR for a number of reasons. The DHR and FR supporters made around £200 each and the RNLA’s collection was about £350,” Barrie said.

The Darjeeling Railway Community Support, charity sub-committee of the DHRS, would use the money for charity work for communities residing along the DHR tracks.

No wonder then that the Indian Railways have recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the DHRS for furthering the interests of the DHR!

This is not the end for the DHR lovers as, like every time, the event concluded with a promise of a repeat performance.

All this leaves us with a simple question to answer in the end: When they can do so much from so far away, why can’t we do something for our own sanu rail living right here? □





# FACTS ON DARJEELING

Extracted from the Bengal District  
Gazetteer- Darjeeling 1907

In 1817, the East India Company struggled with Himalayan States on behalf of Raja of Sikkim, The Raja of Sikkim restored the country between Mechi and the Tista rivers. This was the result of the **Treaty of Titaliya** of 1817. Ten years after the treaty, disputes on the Sikkim-Nepal frontiers arose and the then Governor General sent two Officers viz. Captain Lloyd and Mr. Grant. They recommended the present place of Darjeeling as a site for a sanatorium. The Governor General then deputed Captain Herbert, the Deputy Surveyor General to examine the country. The court of Directors approved the project. General Lloyd was directed to start negotiations with Raja of Sikkim and he succeeded in obtaining the execution of a deed grant by the Raja of Sikkim on 1st February, 1835.



A sketch of the  
Peace Pagoda by  
Mr. Chedup of Darjeeling

## ANSWER TO JUMBLE PRINTED IN VOL 3 ISS 7

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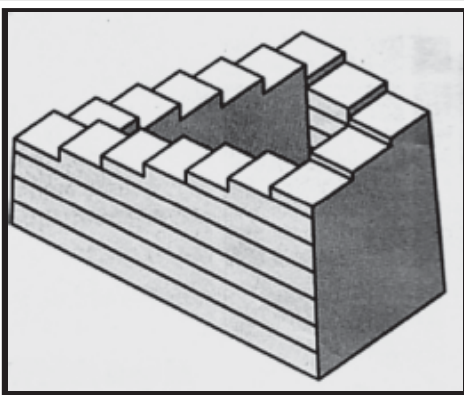
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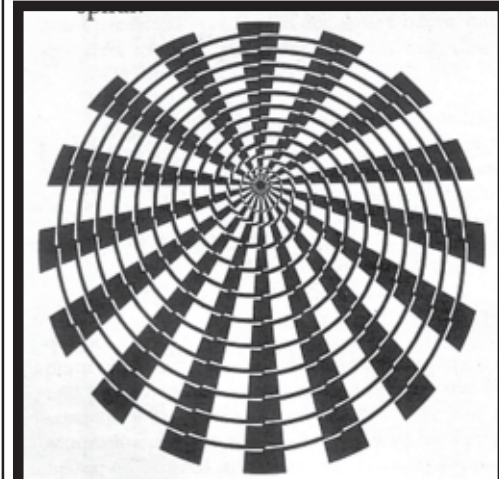
Which step in this staircase is lowest?

Look for lower step and you just go round, getting nowhere. When your eyes and brain take in those straight, two-dimensional lines that form the staircase, they turn them into three dimensions. But they can only do this for one part of the picture at a time—say, a corner where the stars turn and descend—not for the whole image at a glance. So you keep pieces that make sense, even though the staircase itself is impossible.

H	S	E	C	D
T	G	H	A	W
M	U	N	I	R
E	O	L	S	B
S	T	R	I	T

You are carrying around the answers to this puzzle already. Hidden in the grid below are the names of 21 human body parts. To find them, go letter to letter, either horizontally, vertically or diagonally. Just don't use the same square twice in the same word or jump a square to get to that letter you need. Example: NOSE can be spelt by starting with the N in the middle, moving diagonally down to the O, diagonally down again to the S, and up to the E.

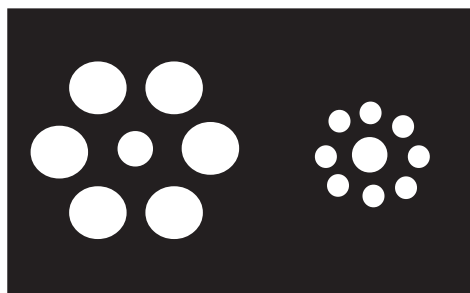
Brains, Chest, Chin, Ear, Gum, Hair, Lung, Mouth, Nail, Nose, Nostril, Rib, Shin, Tibia, Toe, Tongue, Tonsil, Ulna, Wrist, Wrist



Do the lines here form a spiral?

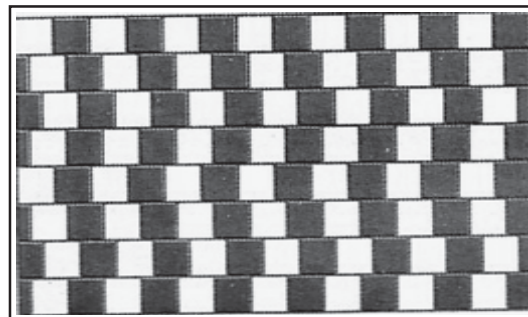
Brace yourself: the spiral you see doesn't exist. Instead it's a series of complete circle. Try tracing one a pencil and you'll see. The key to this illusion: the slanted black and white segments that make each line look like twisted cords. Those segments cause the visual neurons in your brain to signal that the circle slant inwards, creating a false spiral.

Which one of the middle circle is smaller?



The balls are exactly the same size. But the one on the left looks smaller because we tend to make visual judgments—colour, brightness, distance, size—by comparing nearby objects. In this case, the mind is fooled because one ball is small compared to those surrounding it, while the other is large next to those around it.

Do all of these horizontal lines actually bend?



The lines are all straight- and parallel. Get out a ruler if you think we are crazy. They appear to curve because of a trick played on neurons in the visual centre of your brains. The retina sends signals to the part of your brain where edges and lines are created. But the shapes and shadings of this "Café Wall" illusion play havoc with the signals by both exciting and depressing the brain cells. In trying to interpret the muddle message, the brain decides the lines are bent.

Dear Sir,

When I received an invitation from Kalimpong Muslim Youth Social Welfare Organization to attend a talk by Dr. Ataulлах Siddiqui, Director-Markfield Institute of Higher Education, Leicester, U.K; my heart sank.

I attended the meeting, expecting to see a crusty old professor from Leicester like the ones I have met there and have to listen to an equally loving talk for hours.

Upon arriving at the venue, I was pleasantly surprised to find, that not only was Dr. Siddiqui a handsome young man but home grown as well, a man who had left Kalimpong 25 years ago and returned today a highly successful man of the world. A man highly regarded in his field of work due to his own efforts and determination. Welcomed and respected by imminent men and women who seek his advice. He has met dignitaries, among them Mr. Tony Blair and the Queen of England. No mean feat by a son of Kalimpong.

Dr. Siddiqui was born and brought up in Kalimpong educated in S.U.M.I and Kalimpong College. It just goes to show what Kalimpong youth are capable of, if they put their mind to it. He is a source of great inspiration to them.

As for Dr. Siddiqui's talk it was not boring either, as I had expected. He spoke in pure Nepali, which he hasn't forgotten inspite of being away from home for so long. His talk spoken in the local tongue was simple enough for every body to understand. There were light touches of humour which we enjoyed.

The Muslim community has integrated totally with all other communities have in Kalimpong. So much so that when I walk around in town, as I have been doing for the last 60 years, I can't tell who is a Muslim from the others. May be because they all wear blue jeans which Dr. Siddiqui says has become the universal dress code. As far as looks are concerned, Dr Siddiqui looks like a "Bawun"! These facts have their disadvantages, where I am concerned. I can't gate crash into a Muslim home on Id to enjoy good Birani.

I do wish this kind of total integration would take place not only in the rest of India but the whole world. Harmony is so important for progress and peace.

I am sorry I did not meet Dr. Siddiqui during his youth and formative years here in Kalimpong but better late than never. I am very proud of him now.

He is a great inspiration to our youth, a perfect role model to follow.

I wish him well to reach greater heights and achievements in life. A son of Kalimpong our pride and joy never to be forgotten.

Yours faithfully  
Monila De.



Dr. Ataulлах Siddiqui is currently the Director of Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE), Leicester. He specializes in, and teaches 'Islam and Pluralism' and 'Inter Faith Relations'. He is a senior research fellow at The Islamic Foundation and Visiting Fellow at the Centre for the History of Religious and Political Pluralism, University of Leicester. Dr. Siddiqui is the co-editor of Encounters: Journal of Inter-Cultural Perspectives, a bi-annual journal and co-chair of the recently established 'Christian-Muslim Forum'. He is also the founding member of the 'Leicester Council of Faith' an organization of nine major religions in Leicester. Dr. Siddiqui was also a member of the Advisory Board of the Parliament of World Religions, Barcelona in 2004. He is also appointed as external examiner for PhD degrees to several universities in UK and other countries.

He has addressed over hundred seminars in the UK and other countries, including Ebor lecture of York University, Weisfield lecture of Glasgow University, Bradley lecture of PISAI Vatican City, World Congress of Faith and European Councils of Religions, as key note speaker.

He has traveled over thirty countries and personally interacted with leading international figures like the Pope John Paul II, former President of Germany Romano Herzog and former and current Prime Ministers of UK. He was invited by Queen Elizabeth II to a reception at the Buckingham Palace for his contribution to the British societies in 2006.

Dr. Siddiqui received his primary education at Anjuman Islamia Madrasa, Kalimpong and secondary and higher education at the Scottish Universities Mission Institutions (SUMI) and Kalimpong College respectively. He is an executive member of the Nepali Adhyayan Samiti, Hindi Adhyayan Samiti and Anjuman-e-Islamia and was actively involved in a number of youth activities. He was the publisher of Paridarshan with Md. Arif Chhetri as the editor.

His major publications include: Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century, Islam and Other Faiths and Christian and Muslims in the Commonwealth: A Dynamic Role in the future.

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#### Review

"Dr. Sonam B. Wangyal is eastern Himalayan region's one of the most prolific writers in the English language. He has been a regular contributor to major journals like 'Himal, The Himalayan Magazine' (Kathmandu), 'The Statesman' (Nbplus Siliguri edition), 'Himalayan Times' (Kalimpong) and numerous other journals, souvenirs, directories and related materials. Besides his recent successful book on Sikkim and Darjeeling this collection of some of his essays is a wonderful reading that generates humour, sadness, surprise and occasionally ever manages to startle the reader. I thoroughly enjoyed it from the page to the last."

Buddhiman Yonzon  
Central Committee Member  
All India Nepali Bhasa Samity  
Bharatiya Nepali Rastriya Parishad

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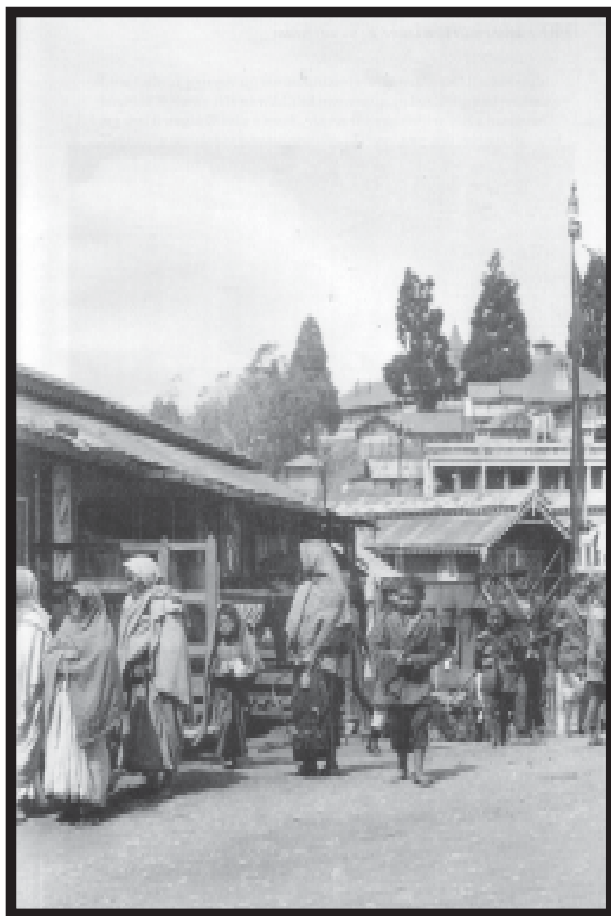
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**D**aura suruwal seems to have out of fashion and even our most respected leaders and the so-called vociferous custodians of our culture do not wear them. We are more comfortable in patloong, coat, suitet and kameez. The wod patloong has been dealt earlier and coat is self-explanaory. 'Suiter' is our pronunciation for the English sweater which the Oxfod dictionary as 'a jersey or pullover of a kind worn before, during, or after exercise, or as an informal garment.' As far as we are concerned the clothing certainly has no relation to exercise but as an informal wear we do use it extensively. 'Kameez' is a strange word that represents the shirt. It is an Arabic word, 'kamis', probably brought to India by the Portuguese. It simply means a tunic and not a tailored garment for wearing but in Nepali/Hindi it became a tailored garment covering the upper torso. During the cold season the 'galfan' or the muffler is often worn around the neck and although Turned (galaban) and Parasmani (galbandh) both give spellings approximating the Hindi 'galabandh' I have always heard it as 'galfan' (Or was I with the wrong company, always?) except whn the word is xtended as 'galbandhi'. When the temperatures dip low the men with mans wear 'bhramcoat' which is our rendering for the warm-coat or overcoat. Those with limited resources fend off the cold with a 'chyadar', a piece of rectangular cloth won over the shoulders. 'Chyadar' is the corruption of the Hindi 'chadder' with the same meaning. Once again Parasmani's dictionary enters the wod as it spoken by Hindi speakers and describes it as 'a large sheet of cloth; a table cloth; a beg sheet; a tin sheet.' The same poorer folks wear 'can-bis jutta' which we derived from the canvas shoes. Nowadays, the normal leather shoes are just referred to as 'jutta' but as a child I was always ordered to 'Boot-jutta lage' whenever my school shoes had to be worn, thogh they were never boots in the real sense. The other footwear is, of course, the socks which we call 'moja' and the word comes to us from the Hindi 'moza' which in turn came from the Pehlevi/ Persian 'mochha'. At the opposite end we wear a hat or a 'topi'. There have been attempts to etymologize this word as Portuguese ('topo') but that wold be incorrect because in the ancient Prakrit the word 'topia' was always there and one can trace recorded references of the word as 'tupy' and 'topetes' in common currency in India as far back as 1498, which is mushbefore the Portuguese made any influence in our languages. Our most sung about 'topi' is the 'Dhaka topi' which was once made out of a particular kind of cloth embroidered with flowers and imported from Dacca. I have left for the end the aistcoat which almost always complemnts the 'daura suruwal'. Allora, Parasmani Pradhan and Raajnarayan Pradhan's dictionaries would like us to believe that this item of clothing is pronounced as 'westcoat', 'estcoat' etc. they are all very literate persons and probably were embarrassed that the westerners might interpret our pronunciation to mean an ass (gadha) or the rump because all over the district and across in Nepali it is known as the 'aas-coat' and mercifully Kilgou-Duncan-Pradhan's dictionary gives us without any discomfiture the correct form, 'askot'. □



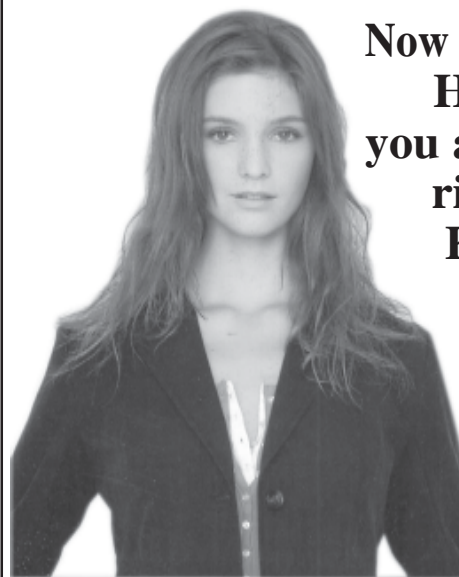


**This photograph show Darjeeling town as it was in the 1930's. By the middle of the last century Darjeeling town had become an important trading town in the region. Tea, Oranges, Wool etc were some of the more famous products that were available in the market. Tourism too had become a major revenue earner by that time.**

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## ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

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Is a Kalimpong boy who is a Associate Fellow, Central University Of Sikkim

Wg. Cdr Praful Rao

Is the Secretary of Kalimpong Consumers Forum and is currently involved in trying to draw the attention of the authorities towards the landslide problems in Kalimpong.

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Monila De

Is considered as one of the leading English writers in the region. Her more than sixty years of experience in Kalimpong makes her a gold-mine of information